

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000193

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECLASSIFY 02/09/2005

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [BA](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR COMBATANT COMMANDER CENTRAL COMMAND,
VISIT TO BAHRAIN 15-16 February 2005

REF: HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL MSG DTG 271630Z JAN 05

Classified By: (U) Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)11. (S) General Abizaid, we look forward to your visit to Bahrain. We have asked for a call on the Crown Prince and Commander in Chief of Bahrain Defence Force, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and Minister of Defense, General Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa. We also expect you will have the opportunity to meet the newly appointed BDF Chief of Staff Major General Sheikh Duaij bin Salman bin Ahmed Al Khalifa.

Counter-terrorism

[¶](#)12. (S) The GOB and Bahrainis in general are casting a wary eye northward and our concerned about the recent terrorist attacks in Kuwait. The death of a Bahraini student visiting Kuwait allegedly caught in the crossfire has brought the deadly reality of potential terrorism closer to home. Minister of Interior Shaikh Rashid Al-Khalifa was dispatched to Kuwait following the latest round of attacks for consultations with the Kuwaiti authorities. An FBI team will arrive next week to begin work with the Ministry of Interior to establish a Counterterrorism Operations Center (CTOC). In your meeting, the Crown Prince will want to hear your latest thinking on regional efforts to combat counterterrorism and will be interested to hear your take on developments in Kuwait.

Bahrain School

[¶](#)13. (S) As always, the status and continuity of the Bahrain School will be on the Crown Prince's mind. We are awaiting a letter from the Secretary Rumsfeld to the Crown Prince in which we will signal our continued support for the school and the need for financial assistance from the GOB. We hope to be able to transmit that letter before your meeting. Your visit will offer an opportunity to follow up with the Crown Prince on that request and reinforce the USG commitment to the Bahrain School.

Cabinet Shuffle

[¶](#)14. (S) Since your last visit in December 2004, there was a minor reshuffling of government portfolios. Although not of direct importance to the Ministry of Defense, the personnel changes reflect a continuing evolution with some of the Prime Minister's supporters eased out of key ministries (notably Finance and Cabinet Affairs), and individuals more in line with the King's and Crown Prince's reform agendas assuming the portfolios. One other personnel change of note is that Bahrain's former ambassador to the U.S. Ambassador Khalifah Al-Khalifa has recently assumed the position of Deputy at the BNSA.

Iraq/Iran

[¶](#)15. (S) Bahrain supports our goals and role in Iraq. King Hamad and the Council of Ministers hailed the Iraqi elections as a success. They recognize the critical nature of stabilizing the security situation, and hope the Iraqis establish a government that represents all of the country's communities. The empowerment of Iraq's Shia community has reverberated strongly in Bahrain, and Bahrain's Shia community, the majority of which boycotted municipal and Parliamentary elections in 2002, are taking a closer look at upcoming elections in 2006 as a result. On Iran, the GOB continues to be worried about Iranian influence and instability in Iraq that could impact Bahrain's own Shia majority, and ultimately affect Bahrain's reforms in the political and economic spheres. Bahrain has historically kept an eye on potential Iranian threats to Bahrain and the region, and their interest in containing Iran dovetails with ours. Bahraini leaders, at the same time, stress their hope that the Iran WMD problem will be resolved diplomatically.

Bilateral Military Ties

[¶](#)16. (S) Our bilateral military relationship with Bahrain remains very strong. With the appointment of the new permanent Chief of Staff, Major General Sheikh Duaij bin Salman bin Ahmed Al Khalifa (as of 5 February, former commander of Special Forces),

marking the 37th anniversary of the BDF, we are confident that our military relationship will continue to flourish. This appointment is welcome after the sudden departure of General Rashid (Chief of Staff to Minister of Interior) and General Al Zayani (Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations to Director of Public Security) to the Ministry of Interior (MOI) some eight months ago, which impacted the leadership in the BDF due to no ready successors.

17. (S) With ever increasing scrutiny of the defense budget by parliament, recently reduced oil revenue grants from Saudi Arabia, and an increased emphasis on commercial development, we have noticed a significant reduction of new FMS purchases and BDF difficulty in modernization and sustainment of existing programs over the past 12 months. We continue to have strong support for our bilateral exercise program to include leveraging the presence of NAVCENT, and the BDF continues to lead by hosting events such as the regional CENTCOM Disaster Preparedness Conference. The annual Special Forces exercise INHERENT FURY is in progress and exercise NEON FALCON, supported by NAVCENT, will start in one week. Bahrain has committed two Special Forces platoons to deploy to Afghanistan in support of the GWOT. The first platoon is currently training in the UAE and is expected to deploy with an Emirate element in April 2005. Finally, the Military Consultative Committee (MCC) meeting will occur in Washington from 22-24 February with the theme being counter-terrorism. The BDF plays a supporting role in this effort with the MOI as the lead agency.

MONROE